ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF OF GEOTECHNICAL TEST PITS BETWEEN THE RIVER SEVERN AND HYLTON ROAD, WORCESTER

Tom Vaughan

With contributions by Dennis Williams

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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WCM 101649

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Tom Vaughan

With contributions by Dennis Williams

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken of geotechnical pits excavated between the River Severn and Hylton Road, Worcester (centred on NGR: SO 842 550; Fig 1), on behalf of Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd. Jacobs were contracted by the Environment Agency, who intends to undertake flood alleviation works for which a planning application will be submitted to Worcester City Council. It is conjectured that remains site of archaeological interest may be affected. The project aimed to identify any exposed archaeological remains and determine their date, nature and location.

Alluvium was noted, at a depth of 1.40m to 2.30m below the present ground surface, directly below modern make up and demolition deposits. A single sherd of Roman Severn Valley ware was recovered from the alluvium. The overlying deposits were determined to be of 19th/20th century origin, representing the deliberate dumping of debris associated with the buildings which occupied the southern half of the site from at least the later 18th century until the mid 20th century, along with the raising of the ground level to prevent seasonal flooding.

In situ structural remains were identified within three of the Test Pits (106, 108 and 110): brick walls with a sandstone foundation and associated floor of 19th century date; brick walls and a possible floor surface from the later 18th or early 19th century; and a cobble surface. The first two Both are interpreted to be cellars, the second of which lay within the Mughouse Inn, as indicated on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey. The third appears to have formed part of a larger yard, possibly for the Chequer's Inn, denoted on the same map.

No significant archaeological remains or artefacts were observed.

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Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken of geotechnical pits excavated between the River Severn and Hylton Road, Worcester (centred on NGR: SO 842 550; Fig 1), on behalf of Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd. Jacobs were contracted by the Environment Agency, who intends to undertake flood alleviation works for which a planning application will be submitted to Worcester City Council. It is conjectured that remains site of archaeological interest may be affected.

1.2 **Project parameters**

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (IFA 2001) and to the *General standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester City* (WCM 2006).

1.3 **Aims**

The project aimed to identify any exposed archaeological remains and determine their date, nature and location. This information may then be used to inform the future development.

2. **Methods**

2.1 **Documentary search**

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of Worcester Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition to the sources listed in the bibliography the following were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- 1779, George Young, Map of the City of Worcester, WCRO BA 2960 r726; PACI
- 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1884, Worcestershire sheet XXXIII.3.24 & XXXIII.7.4, scale 1:500
- 1930, Ordnance Survey, sheet SO 85 NW, scale 6":1 mile
- 1954, Ordnance Survey, sheet SO 85 NW, scale 6":1 mile
- 1965, Ordnance Survey, sheet SO 85 NW, scale 1:10,000
- 1975, Ordnance Survey, sheet SO 85 NW, scale 1:10,000

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

No specification has been prepared for this project. However, the investigation follows on from a previous evaluation, undertaken by the Service, for which a specification was prepared, and which remains relevant (HEAS 2008).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 83 and 27 June 2008. The site reference number and site code is WCM 101649.

Observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to the geotechnical test pits, excavated by Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd. Ten test pits were recorded, out of a total of nineteen excavated.

2.2.2 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams

2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995, appendix 4).

2.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994).

Two bone artefacts were examined, but neither was worthy of comment, and so they are not described below, nor included in the Table 1 quantification.

2.4 Environmental archaeology methodology

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). In the event no deposits or layers were identified which were considered suitable for analysis.

2.5 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. Topographical and archaeological context

The topographical and archaeological background to the area has previously been presented as part of the evaluation report prepared by the Service (Vaughan 2008, 5-6). The evaluation identified a sequence of deposits, containing variable post-medieval and modern material. They were considered to be of 19th/20th century origin, representing deliberate make-up and dump deposits following the demolition of buildings which occupied the frontage of Hylton Road from at least the later 18th century until the mid 20th century, along with the raising of the ground level to prevent seasonal flooding. A few Roman and medieval artefacts were also recovered, but considered to be residual.

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The geotechnical test pits recorded are shown in Figure 2. The structures identified are recorded in Figure 3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

At no point was the natural undisturbed matrix observed.

Alluvium was identified within seven of the ten recorded Test Pits (101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 108 and less clearly in 109), at depths varying from 1.40m to 2.30m below the present ground surface.

The depth of the alluvium was generally greater toward the south-eastern end of the site. It lay directly below modern make-up and demolition layers. There was no surviving topsoil and subsoil sequence.

4.1.2 Phase 2 Modern deposits

A sequence of deposits containing variable quantities of modern demolition debris and occasional industrial fuel waste was recorded in all ten Test Pits. Only within Test Pit 7 were these modern layers found to continue below the full depth of excavation, at 1.70m. It should be noted that Test Pit 105 was located adjacent, where similar modern dump deposits continued to 2.20m depth.

A brick wall (16002) with a sandstone foundation (16005) and an associated probable floor surface (16006) were recorded in Test Pit 106 (Fig 3; Plate 1). The bricks were bedded in lime mortar and survived from a depth of 0.75m below the present ground surface. It formed the north-west corner of a structure. The probable floor was noted at approximately 2.30m depth. The materials used in its construction were unclear.

Two brick walls were recorded within Test Pit 108. The first (18002) was noted from a depth of 1.20m below the present ground surface and was aligned northwest to southeast (Plate 2). The second (18005), within a west extension to the original trench was on a perpendicular alignment, at a depth of 1.40m. A possible stone floor (18003) was noted on the southeast side of the former wall, at 1.40m depth (Fig 3).

A cobbled surface (111002) was noted within the south-eastern end of Test Pit 110, at a depth of 0.73m below the present surface (Plate 4). It was directly overlain by a mixed make up layer of mixed modern building demolition rubble. It was unclear what lay below the cobbles, and no structures were noted adjacent.

No layers, structures or deposits were identified predating the later 18th or early 19th century.

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4.2 Artefact analysis, by Dennis Williams

4.2.1 The artefact assemblage

The artefactual assemblage recovered during this watching brief is summarised in Table 1. The overall standard of preservation of the artefacts was moderately good. The total weight recovered from four areas was 10.208kg, but as with the evaluation previously carried out in this area, the pottery assemblage was very limited, comprising 17 sherds with a total weight of 278g. All of these sherds came from Test-pits 103 and 105, as did some undiagnostic clay pipe fragments.

Test-pit 105 provided the greatest range of materials. These included a number of unglazed post-medieval floor tiles (contexts 15004 and 15005) and brick fragments (15004), though the latter material was insufficiently intact to be datable. Miscellaneous items from 15004 comprised a substantial number of well-preserved oyster shells, one small piece of dense slag (possibly Roman), and one piece of coal. A piece of slag from 13001 had a very low density, indicating that this was probably a waste product of a relatively efficient post-medieval or modern iron smelting process, rather than being of Roman origin.

Two complete bricks were examined. One, a sample from a brick wall (18005), was unusually thick ($3\frac{1}{8}$ inch), and probably late 18^{th} to early 19^{th} century in date, i.e. from the period during which the 'brick tax' was applied. The other, also from a wall (16002), was $2\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, and therefore probably late 19^{th} century in date.

Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
Brick	Post-medieval	4	7060
Brick/tile	Undiagnostic	2	22
Coal	-	1	10
Pipe	Tobacco	6	18
Pottery	Post-medieval	7	164
Pottery	Post-med/modern	9	72
Pottery	Roman	1	42
Shell	Oyster	57	2040
Slag	Post-med/modern	1	8
Slag	Roman?	1	6
Tile	Post-medieval	12	766
	Totals:	101	10208

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

4.2.2 The pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). No diagnostic form sherds were available as dating evidence, so the pottery in this assemblage has been assessed in terms of broad periods of production, according to fabrics.

The pottery assemblage was dominated by common post-medieval and modern fabrics, including red and buff wares (78 and 91 respectively), and stone china (85). A small number of porcelain wasters (83.1) were also noted; these were all in an unglazed, biscuit-fired state, and had presumably been deposited amongst waste from another part of Worcester.

A single Severn Valley ware sherd (12) was the only Roman artefact recovered. This came from an alluvial deposit (13003).

Fabric no.	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
12	Severn Valley ware	1	42
56	Stone china	5	56
78	Post-medieval red wares	2	66
83.1	Worcester porcelain	4	16
91	Post-medieval buff wares	4	86
100	Miscellaneous post-medieval wares	1	12

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

5. Synthesis and significance, by Tom Vaughan and Dennis Williams

As in the evaluation (Vaughan 2008), no significant archaeological remains or artefacts were observed. The make up and demolition deposits observed within the Test Pits were determined to be of $19^{th}/20^{th}$ century origin, representing the deliberate dumping of debris associated with the buildings which occupied the southern half of the site from at least the later 18^{th} century until the mid 20^{th} century, along with the raising of the ground level to prevent seasonal flooding.

In situ structural remains were identified within three of the Test Pits (106, 108 and 110). These were respectively; brick walls with sandstone foundation and an associated floor of 19th century date; brick walls and a possible floor of later 18th o early 19th century date; and a cobbled surface. The first two appear to be cellars. Of these, the second lies within a building denoted as the Mughouse Inn on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey. The third appears to be part of a larger yard, possibly for the Chequer's Inn, as denoted on the same map.

The single Roman pottery sherd provided some evidence of much earlier activity, but the nature of its context (alluvial) and its quantity did not indicate that this activity was necessarily in the vicinity of the site. The alluvium lay directly beneath the modern layers and otherwise contained occasional modern debris. The remainder of the assemblage was comparable with the findings of the evaluation (Vaughan 2008, 6-8) and were consistent with the presence of post-medieval buildings and domestic activity in the general area of the site. The biscuit-fired porcelain indicated that deposition of industrial waste (presumably from the Worcester porcelain works further down stream on the other side of the River Severn) had also taken place.

6. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Jacobs Engineering Ltd of geotechnical test pits between the River Severn and Hylton Road, Worcester (centred on NGR: SO 842 550; HER ref. WCM 101649).

Alluvium was noted, at a depth of 1.40m to 2.30m below the present ground surface, directly below modern make up and demolition deposits. A single sherd of Roman Severn Valley ware was recovered from the alluvium. The overlying deposits were determined to be of $19^{th}/20^{th}$ century origin, representing the deliberate dumping of debris associated with the buildings

which occupied the southern half of the site from at least the later 18^{th} century until the mid 20^{th} century, along with the raising of the ground level to prevent seasonal flooding.

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No significant archaeological remains or artefacts were observed.

7. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Ed Wilson and Scott Mountford (The Environment Agency), James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council), Richard Buckley, Chris Bradley, Clare Le Brecht and Jaime Ball (Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd).

8. **Personnel**

The report was written by Tom Vaughan on the basis of field record prepared by Adam Lee and Stephen Potten. Finds analysis was by Dennis Williams and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

9. **Bibliography**

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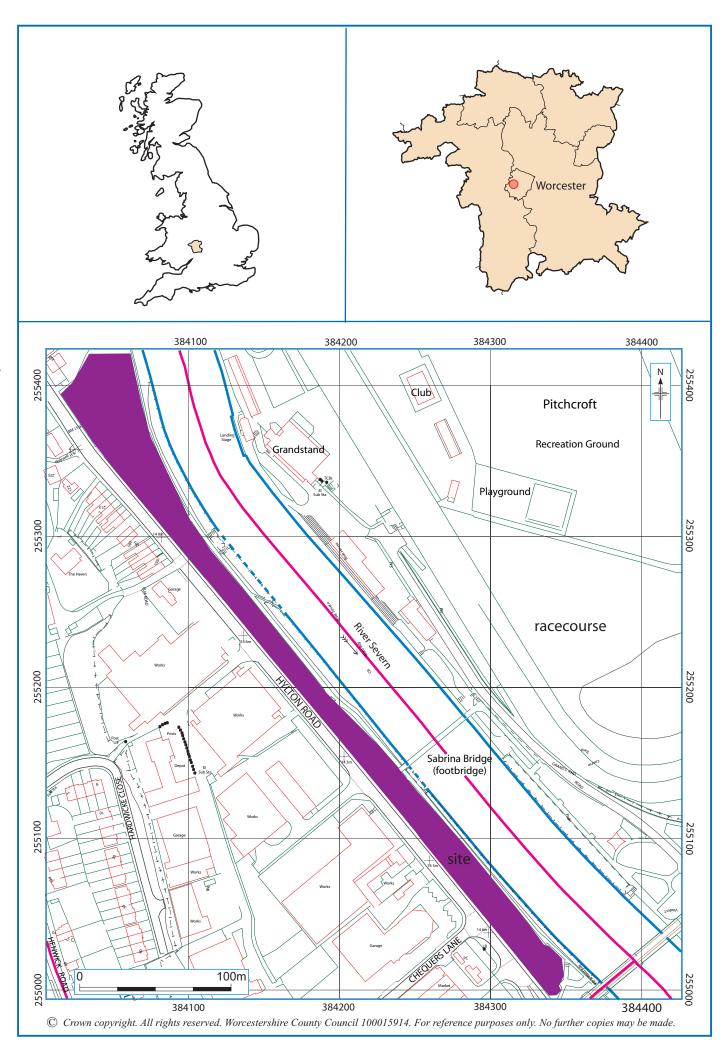
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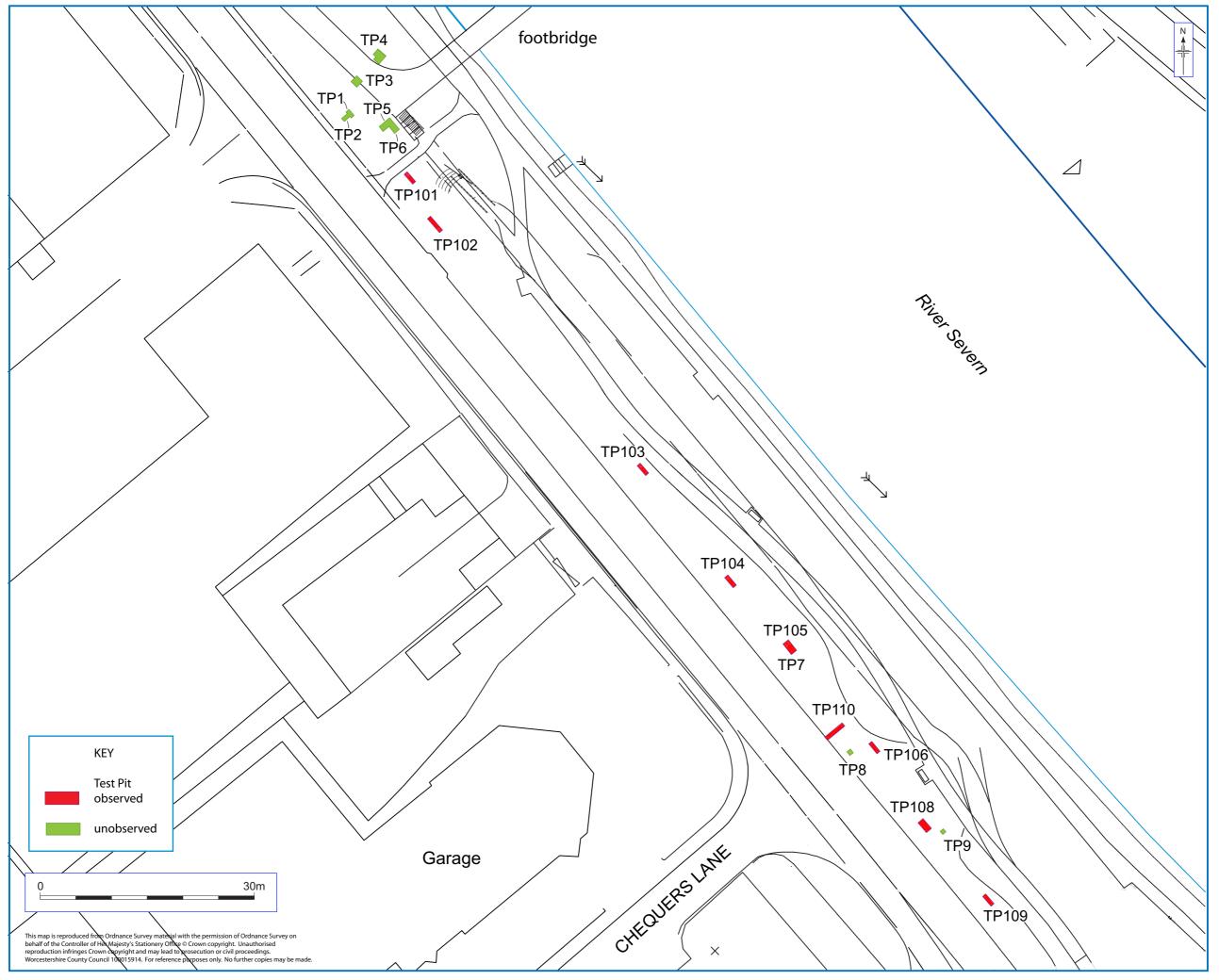
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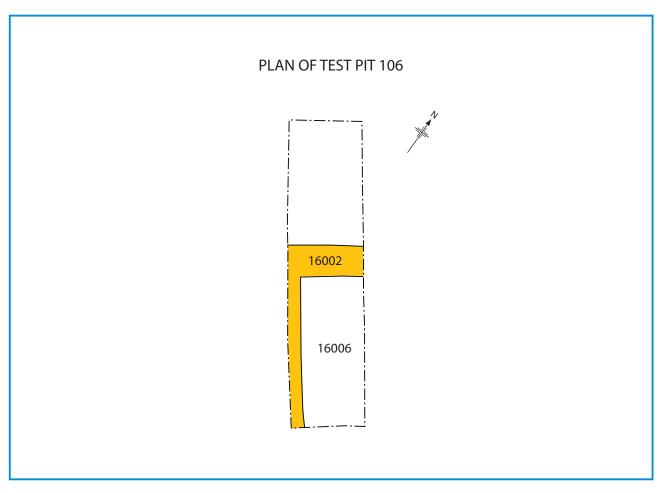
Figures

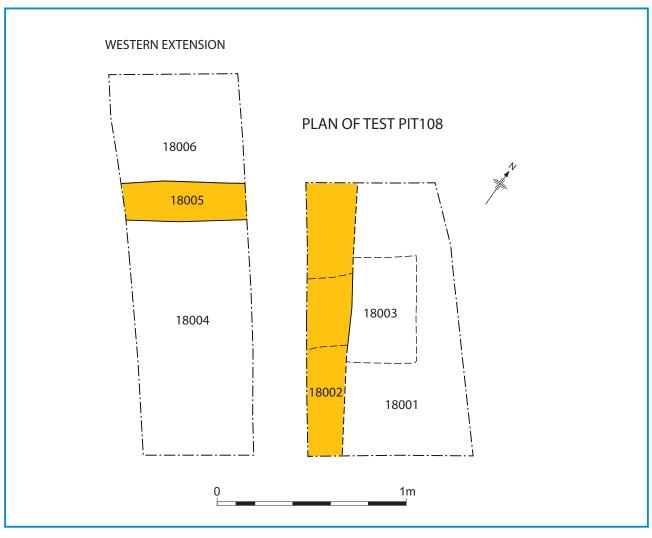


Location of the site.



Trial Pit locations Figure 2





Plan of Test Pits106 and 108

Plates



Plate 1, Test Pit 106, wall16002, view south west



Plate 2, Test Pit 108, wall 18002 and floor 18003, view north



Plate 3, Test pit 109, general view north west



Plate 4, Test Pit 110, cobbled surface 11102

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Test Pits 2-6, 8 and 9

Unrecorded

Test Pit 7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1m Width: 0.40m Depth: 1.70m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
10000	Topsoil	Compact and cohesive, dark brown sandy silt; moderate stones and CBM frags.	0.00-0.10m
10001	Make up layer	Compact and cohesive, mid brown clayey silt; frequent CBM, stones, ash, charcoal and mortar.	0.10-0.50m
10002	Make up layer	Compact and cohesive orangey brown silty clay; moderate CBM, stones, ash, and mortar.	0.50-0.70m
10003	Make up layer	Un-compact dark blackish brown sandy silt, frequent large CBM, stones, ash, coal and mortar.	0.70m +

Test Pit 101

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.70m Width: 0.40m Depth: 2.50m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
11000	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy silt; moderate small-medium CBM.	0.00-0.15m
11001	Make up layer	Dark brown sandy silt; frequent large CBM, charcoal, ash and mortar. Loose.	0.15-1.15m
11002	Alluvium / make up layer	Mid brown clayey silt; moderate small-large CBM and charcoal. A mixed interface layer between 11001 and 11003. Compact.	1.15-1.50m
11003	Alluvium	Mid brown silty clay; occasional small-medium rounded stones and small CBM. Some organic inclusions. Compact.	1.50-1.90m
11004	Alluvium	Mid grey silty clay; occasional small-medium rounded stones and manganese flecks. Some organic inclusions. Compact.	1.90m +

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.50m Width: 0.40m Depth: 2.20m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
12000	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy silt; moderate small-medium CBM.	0.00-0.15m
12001	Make up layer	Mid brown sandy silt; frequent large CBM, glas, mortar, charcoal, small-medium stones. Loose.	0.15-1.50m
12002	Alluvium	Mid brown clayey silt; moderate small-medium CBM; occasional manganese flecks and frags. Compact	1.50m +

Test Pit 103

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.90m Width: 0.35m Depth: 2.00m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
13000	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy silt; moderate small-medium CBM.	0.00-0.25m
13001	Make up / demolition deposit	Mixed deposit with bands of light yellowish grey sandy silt with frequent mortar; and black ash and clinker; moderate small-large stones.	0.25-0.65m
13002	Demolition deposit	Brick, floor tile, glass, mortar, ash, clinker, plastic sheeting and asbestos frags. Loose.	0.65-1.55m
13003	Alluvium	Mid brown clayey silt; occasional small-medium rounded stones, manganese flecks, small-medium CBM. One sherd of Severn valley Ware.	1.55m +

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.40m Width: 0.40m Depth: 2.40m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
14000	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy silt; moderate small-medium CBM.	0.00-0.25m
14001	Make up layer	Mid reddish brown silty clay; moderate small-medium stones. Compact.	0.25-0.40m
14002	Make up layer	Dark blackish brown sandy silt with extensive ash and clinker; occasional CBM and small-medium rounded stones.	0.35-0.80m
14003	Make up layer	Dark sandy silt; moderate small-medium CBM and manganese flecks; occasional small-medium rounded stones.	0.80-1.00m
14004	Make up layer	Mid brown sandy silt; frequent small-large CBM and manganese.	1.00-1.20m
14005	Alluvium / make up layer	Mixed deposit, comprising 14004 and 14006. Interface layer?	1.20-2.00m
14006	Alluvium	Mid brown clayey silt; occasional small-medium rounded stones, manganese flecks, small-medium CBM, charcoal frags and flecks.	2.00m +

Test Pit 105

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.80m Width: 0.40m Depth: 2.50m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
15000	Topsoil	Mid reddish brown silty clay; moderate small-medium stones. Compact.	0.00-0.10m
15001	Make up layer	Mid orangey brown clayey silt. Frequent small-large CBM, modern pottery and small-large rounded stones. Same as 10001.	0.10-0.60m
15002	Make up layer	Red silty clay; moderate small-large CBM; same as 10002 and 14001.	0.60-0.90m
15003	Make up layer	Un-compact dark blackish brown sandy silt, frequent ash, clinker, large CBM, stones, coal and mortar. Same as 10003.	0.90-1.90m
15004	Make up layer	Mid brown sandy silt; moderate CBM, pottery and organic material; frequent oyster shells.	1.90-2.20m
15005	Alluvium	Dark brownish grey clayey and sandy silt; moderate small-medium stones, manganese, charcoal flecks, CBM and medieval pottery.	2.20m +

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.80m Width: 0.45m Depth: 2.30m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
16000	Topsoil	Mid reddish brown silty clay; moderate small-medium stones. Compact.	0.00-0.20m
16001	Make up layer	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with extensive CBM and mortar. Loose.	0.20-0.75m
16002	Brick wall	Corner of wall structure. Bricks 80 by 110 by 230mm; aligned northwest to southeast, then turns northeast to southwest; bedded in lime mortar. Stepped out <i>c</i> 0.10m at 1m and 1.90m over 16005. butted by 16003 and 16004.	0.75->2.10m
16003	Make up layer?	Dark blackish brown sandy silt; charcoal, coal, ash, clinker, brick, tile and manganese; frequent mortar flecks and frags. Loose. Same as 16004.	1.60m +
16004	Make up layer?	Mid-dark brown sandy silt turning to clayey silt with depth; charcoal, coal, ash, clinker, brick, tile and manganese; frequent mortar flecks and frags. Same as 16003.	1.60m +
16005	Foundation	Large sandstone block; foundation for 16002. Overlies 16006.	1.90-2.30m
16006	Floor surface?	Solid material at base of excavation. Composition unclear.	2.30m +

Test Pit 108 (incorporating Test Pit 107)

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.50m Width: 0.90m Depth: 2.00m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
18000	Topsoil	Light brown turfed sandy silt. Not compact. Occasional CBM frags and flecks.	0.00-0.20m
18001	Make up layer	Mid-light brown sandy silt; frequent CBM, charcoal flecks, mortar flecks and frags. Same as 16001?	0.20-1.20m
18002	Brick wall	Wall aligned northwest to southeast; bedded on yellowish white lime mortar; Butted by 18001.	1.20-1.40m
18003	Sand/siltstone surface?	Bluish grey sand/silt stone slab. Possible surface butting 18002.	1.40m +
18004	Make up layer	Light brown sandy silt with extensive small-large CBM and mortar with occasional clinker and charcoal. Compact.	0.90-1.40m
18005	Brick wall	Wall aligned approx. northeast to southwest; bricks 0.70 by 110 by 230mm, bedded in lime mortar.	1.40m +
18006	Alluvium	Mid brown clayey silt; no inclusions, butts 18005	1.40m +

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.40m Width: 0.40m Depth: 2.50m

Orientation: northwest to southeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
19000	Topsoil	Light brown sandy silt, Not compact. Occasional CBM frags,	0.00-0.10m
19001	Make up layer	Light-mid greyish brown sandy silt; frequent charcoal, mortar, small CBM frags and small angular stones.	0.10-0.30m
19002	Make up layer	Light yellowish brown sandy clayey silt, small medium sub rounded stones, occasional charcoal, CBM and mortar flecks; occasional lenses of pinkish red clay.	0.30-0.90m
19003	Make up layer	Successive thin bands of redeposited building debris; generally in light/mid yellowish brown sandy silt. Frequent charcoal, mortar, CBM and modern pottery.	0.90-1.90m
19004	Make up layer	Redeposited light brown sandy clay; occasional brick and tile frags, charcoal and mortar.	1.90- c 2.35m
19005	Alluvium?	Light yellowish brown sandy clay; slightly mottled; unclear if contains inclusions.	2.30m +

Test Pit 110

Maximum dimensions: Length: 3.70m Width: 0.40m Depth: 0.73m

Orientation: northeast to southwest

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
111000	Topsoil	Light brown turfed sandy silt; occasional CBM frags and modern debris. Not cohesive.	0.00-0.15m
111001	Make up layer	Mixed deposit. Light brown sandy silt; frequent CBM, mortar, charcoal and stone; occasional bands of charcoal and cleaner sandy silt. Disturbed by modern services.	0.10-0.73m
111002	Cobbled surface?	Medium cobbles set in a flat surface; only observed at west end of trench; sealed by 111001.	0.73m +

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

3	Field Work Progress Reports AS2
1	Photographic Records AS3
24	Digital photographs
1	Context Number Catalogues AS5
11	Trench Record Sheets AS41
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery

Foregate Street

Worcester

WR1 2PW

Tel (01905) 25371